



WELFARE PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUMMARY

Event: High Performance Bonus Award Meeting

Date: June 5, 2000

Location: Doubletree Hotel, Arlington, Virginia

I. Background

The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance (TA) Network, funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Family Assistance (OFA), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), coordinated this meeting involving select representatives from States that received an ACF High Performance Bonus Award in December 1999. The High Performance Bonuses were authorized by the 1996 welfare reform legislation. In the first year awards were made, twenty-seven states were awarded a total of over \$200 million. The criteria for the awards were based on four work related measures: job placement rate (also referred to as job entry), job success (or success in the workforce which was a combination of two work related measures: job retention and earnings gain rate), increase in job placement, and increase in job success.

II. Participants

The States selected for this meeting were from among States that ranked high in the Award criteria areas of job entry, job retention, and/or earnings gain rate. A panel discussion was held for each of these subject areas. States represented included Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Washington. The Welfare Peer TA Network's selection process for determining which State would be invited to this meeting involved consideration of criteria such as number of Award recipients in each category, State rankings from the Award criteria, County vs. State administered, time limits, representation from different DHHS Regions, urban vs. rural, and large vs. small States. Federal representatives included invited participants from OFA as well as the ACF Office of Planning Research and Evaluation (OPRE).

III. Overview

The purpose of this one-day meeting was to provide a discussion forum for States and Federal representatives to engage in dialogue about previous, ongoing, and/or future State programs or initiatives that have goals or outcomes that are similar to those of the High Performance Bonus Award-s selection criteria. It was anticipated that various cross-cutting themes would surface throughout the day reflected in many of the State specific discussions. The majority of State participants felt that their State won the Award due to circumstances such as a combination of State agency initiatives along with the shrinking caseloads and the current strong economy. However, as the meeting progressed, it became apparent that there were many similarities that the Award winners shared in regards to programmatic and strategic welfare reform policies.

IV. Highlights

The major cross-cutting themes that emerged during each of the three panel discussions follow below. States mentioned specifically are listed for exemplary purposes only. In most cases, an example could be cited for each of the following themes from every State in attendance at this meeting. In addition, as all three of the panel topics are interrelated, many times the discussions featured State sharing of programs or initiatives from States that were not part of the panel for one of the three topics. For more specific State program information, refer to the attached participant list to determine who to contact to obtain more details from any particular State.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Job Entry Panel

⌘ Community Involvement

Many States are turning to communities (contractors, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, local community colleges, etc.) for support as they know the clients and are able to reach them best. They reported that partnering with these organizations is key to finding jobs and placing successful candidates in those jobs. Many times these organizations need to be educated on the welfare system today. Local employers and chambers of commerce can be very useful starting points to begin this process. All states felt that community involvement was crucial to not only job entry but also in the areas of job retention and earnings gain.

- C Delaware uses a unique mix of local service providers in its compliance service contracts with community based agencies. Different providers (other than the original service provider) make home visits to check up on clients when sanctions have been enforced.
- C Washington staffs its call center program (started in 1998) with local residents who call clients in evenings and on weekends to check up on them.

⌘ ALearn As You Go@Process

States are currently managing staff changes, client population shifts, and political arena changes as they continually adapt their WorkFirst strategies. The States that won Bonus Awards were open and willing to try new methods if their original welfare reform strategies did not work out as planned.

⌘ Strong Economy

The current national economic situation created an enormous need for new jobs that has been unique in recent years. This has greatly assisted job placement in all States.

⌘ Education and Training

States stressed the need for ongoing education and training for the hardest to serve even if it delayed job entry. They stressed that a well prepared candidate is more desirable to employers than one who has been rushed to an interview with minimal skill preparation or job coaching.

- C Indiana recently shifted away from its strategy of placing clients in jobs as soon as possible and is now emphasizing more detailed intake assessments, life skills and job preparation coaching, and increased post employment/job advancement support. In support of this new mind set, the State ended its contracts that paid on the basis of how many people are placed and kept in jobs. It now focuses on contracts that stress the fundamentals needed to find and maintain work.
- C Tennessee prepares clients for work through its life skills modules that take place before the client starts a job search. All of its employment training is now work based and in the context of an actual job or work environment.

Job Retention Panel

⌘ Financial Incentives

A majority of the States use these to encourage clients to maintain their long-term employment goals. They offer financial incentives and performance-

based contracts to spur activity and increase motivation. Many also mentioned the strategic use of income disregards and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

- C Texas offers clients a post-employment stipend of \$1200 a month for a maximum of twelve months.
- C California has devolved its welfare reform program down to the counties and includes provisions for fiscal incentives.

⌘ Ongoing Education and Training

The consensus of the meeting participants was that this is critical in helping clients maintain long-term employment. (Most States even mandated this for those clients needing it.)

⌘ Support Services

Everyone agreed that transportation, child care, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, education for low skills and learning disabilities, domestic violence services, health and dental care, etc. need to be addressed by States if they want clients to stay employed. Community groups and contractors played a large part in service delivery for many of the States.

- Rhode Island's RItE Care program has been cited as a national model for its expanded and fully implemented health care coverage for families. Its Starting RItE program assures that all children are given an opportunity to benefit from quality early care and education as well as before and after school services.
- Arizona's lease-to-own car program recently leased its 400th car, and the State has been making progress in responding to odd hour child care needs for clients as well as expanded dental care coverage.

⌘ Team Based Approach

Several States implemented a strategy that involved different case managers depending on a client's stage of employment along with close coordination between and among TANF staff, community groups, and contractors involved in client services.

- Riverside County California has a unique service delivery system that builds on its original WorkFirst program design of several years ago. Its current program is called WorkPlus and has three phases. Each phase

involves the client interacting with an entirely different county staff that has a distinct culture and definition of what constitutes success. Its third phase is delivered by community based organizations.

- Texas has recently launched its employment retention and advancement demonstration project (funded through an OPRE employment retention and advancement planning grant) that builds on the collaborations between the Texas DHS, Texas Workforce Commission, Local Workforce Development Boards, and other local stakeholders. Its two-tiered initiative will combine a team-based case management approach along with a post-employment stipend.

Earnings Gain Panel

⌘ Employer Support

All the States felt this was paramount to any client's success in advancing to higher levels of salary, responsibility, and skill levels. Ongoing job related training and active involvement in client support services were mentioned as important employer roles.

- Florida launched a pilot project with the Orlando Chamber of Commerce in which they set up an “employer institute” for local businesses. The Florida Department of Children and Families hosted training sessions for human resource professionals to learn more about the TANF program and support they can provide.
- Rhode Island’s Department of Human Services has obtained the backing of its Governor in gaining employer support. The Governor has asked local businesses to set aside jobs of at least thirty hours per week for clients that are qualified, pre-screened, and ready to work.

⌘ Job Developers

Many States stress job development activities through both the TANF staff and workforce consultants.

- South Carolina evaluates its caseworkers on their success in placing clients in jobs and then helping them advance.
- Washington’s WorkFirst Post-Employment Labor Exchange program can assist clients in obtaining a G.E.D. and even pays for testing fees. Later, after becoming job ready, the program assists clients in obtaining skills training at local community or technical colleges. Assistance in job

preparation, job search, and finding appropriate jobs for clients that match their skills and interests is also available.

⌘ Client Tracking

Several States track clients' progress and wage increases, and others even evaluate their caseworkers on their success in helping clients advance in their jobs.

- South Carolina and Florida are both conducting studies currently to track clients earnings gains.
- Arizona developed a unique integrated database management system that assisted it in more effectively tracking its different types of clients.

Overall Ongoing Themes (All States)

⌘ Program Goal Consistency

Most of the States did not implement programs aimed at winning a High Performance Bonus Award. They made programmatic and policy decisions based on their own overarching program goals and not specifically to win the Bonus Award. Yet, many of their program goals were consistent with the criteria of the Award selection process. For most States, participants reflected on the fact that the success of these programs indirectly contributed to them winning the Award. This was reinforced by an observation by one participant that many of the States' data showed that they were very similar in their outcomes evaluated for each of the Award categories. (The actual numerical State Award rankings themselves were extremely close among the majority of the States.)

⌘ Marketing Strategies

All States felt getting the word out to clients, employers, communities, and other participating parties was extremely beneficial to the success of any program. They stressed that States' welfare offices should obtain buy-in on their program and policy goals from high-level executive and political offices. This aided in helping to bring other agencies/organizations to the table to collaborate.

⌘ Public Awareness Campaign

In addition to the above mentioned group, the general public at-large needs to

buy into the States= efforts.

⌘ Employer Outreach

Engaging local chambers of commerce, business organizations, and major local employers was another activity stressed by all the States.

⌘ TANF Staff Culture Change

States felt the success of all programs was in the hands of their State and County TANF staffs. These staffs need to accept the new reform oriented initiatives and policies that are directed at helping clients move from welfare to meaningful long-term work.

⌘ Interagency Collaboration

Coordination and partnerships between TANF and other agencies such as labor, transportation, housing, education, and others contributed strongly to the States= success. Examples of collaboration vehicles include joint staff training, memorandums of understanding/agreement, contracts for services, outstationing of staff, screening and assessments for barriers to employment and self-sufficiency across agencies, interagency advisory committees, and program and client data/research sharing.

⌘ Avoidance of the ACliff Effect@

States emphasized the importance of maintaining ongoing services and supports for clients after they become employed in order to prevent a feeling of abandonment.

⌘ Funding Flexibility

The strategic use of Federal TANF dollars and State MOE funds to assist welfare recipients and low-income families to achieve self-sufficiency was mentioned by all the States. One suggestion several mentioned was to be aware of funding implications on time limits.

⌘ Data Gathering and Research

All the States highlighted the need for the development of appropriate data collection instruments and methods as well as tracking client outcomes. This data as well as any research collected should be made available to the public

for any interested party to review.

V. Final Remarks

The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network would like to thank those States that attended this meeting. One major conclusion to be drawn from these discussions is that States that actively and creatively design successful welfare reform programs that promote the goals of the 1996 welfare legislation will most likely be strong candidates for future High Performance Bonus Awards.

We recognize and acknowledge the fact that winning an award this first year of the High Performance Bonus Program is not in any way a guarantee for success in future Awards. Next year all States are encouraged to apply for a Bonus Award. As with the future of welfare reform, this OPRE initiative is still evolving. In addition to the original four award categories, three more will be added for State performance beginning October 1, 2000: family formation, enrollment in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and enrollment in the Food Stamps Program. Today's welfare rolls are very different than they were when this program was first announced in March 1998. Those hardest to serve and employ^o make up the majority of today's caseloads. These are clients with families that face multiple barriers such as domestic violence, learning disabilities, mental health issues, or substance abuse problems. States will have to continually adapt their program strategies in order to serve these clients. All of the States featured in this meeting have already begun to address and respond to these challenges.

To learn more about the specifics of the High Performance Bonus Program, refer to the DHHS Memorandums TANF-ACF-PI-98-1 and TANF-ACF-PI-98-5. An ACF press release highlighting Award recipients from 1999 may be viewed at the *ACF Press Room* web site at www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/hpb.htm. For more information about this event, or the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network in general, contact Blake Austensen (Deputy Project Director) at (301) 270-0841 or e-mail baustensen@afyainc.com.

Appendix A

AGENDA

AGENDA

Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families

Discussion with Selected High Performance Bonus States

Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network
Commonwealth Room
Double Tree Hotel
300 Army Navy Drive
Arlington, Virginia
June 5, 2000

- 8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. **Registration**
- 9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
Alvin C. Collins, Director, Office of Family Assistance, ACF, DHHS
Sean Hurley, Director, Div. of Data Collection and Analysis, OPRE, ACF, DHHS
- 10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. **Introductions and Workshop Overview**
Lois Bell, ACF/OFA/DHHS
Paul Purnell, AFYA, Inc.
- 10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. **Break**
- 10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. **Discussion of Job Entry Strategies**
Lead Discussant: *Lois Bell, ACF/OFA/DHHS*
Charlene Burkett-Sims, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
Rebecca Varella, Delaware Division of Social Services
Betty Teasley, Tennessee Department of Human Services
Cindy Mund, Washington Department of Social and Health Services
- 12:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. **Lunch**
- 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. **Discussion of Job Retention Strategies**
Lead Discussant: *Mack Storrs, ACF/OFA*
Alex Kam, California Division of Social Services
John Rodgers, Riverside County (CA) Department of Public Social Services

Mark Kleczewski, Minnesota Department of Human Services
Debora Morris, Texas Department of Human Services
Randy Rosati, Rhode Island Department of Human Services

3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Break

3:15 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

Discussion of Earnings Gain Strategies

Lead Discussant: Sean Hurley, ACF/OPRE

Linda Martin, South Carolina Department of Social Services

John Goad, Arizona Department of Economic Security

Hilda Jackson, Washington, DC, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth and Families

Don Winstead, Florida Department of Children and Families

4:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Wrap-Up

Appendix B

PARTICIPANT LIST

Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network

High Performance Bonus Meeting

*Doubletree Hotel
300 Army Navy Drive
Arlington, VA
Commonwealth Meeting Room*

June 5, 2000

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